

STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF RETAINING FULL FY 2010 FUNDING FOR  
CONNECTICUT'S STEM CELL RESEARCH PROGRAM

Chairman Geragosian, Representative Ritter and members of the General Assembly's Appropriations Committee:

I am Myron Genel, Senior Research Scientist and Professor Emeritus of Pediatrics in the Yale Child Health Research Center. I am also president of the Connecticut Academy of Science and Engineering and founding president and chairman of the Board of Directors of Connecticut United for Research Excellence (CURE). I have been a member of Connecticut's Stem Cell Research Advisory Committee since its inception five years ago upon passage of the enabling legislation.

In these multiple roles I have observed the development of a robust stem cell research enterprise centered in Connecticut's three research-intensive universities – Yale, the University of Connecticut (both the Health Center and Storrs campuses) and Wesleyan. Connecticut's stem cell research – relatively modest in funding compared to that in some other states – was the first to actually award research funding and has positioned Connecticut in the forefront of this dynamic, cutting edge field which has the promise of uncovering vast new fields of basic human biology and the potential to develop future therapies which can replace the “half-way technologies” now employed for treatment of many diseases for which we cannot provide definitive cure – diabetes, Parkinson's disease, and spinal cord injury as examples.

Connecticut's Stem Cell Initiative has also provided a critical stimulus for creation of world-class programs at our research universities. This has generated many multiples of external federal and foundation funding to Connecticut, created hundreds of new research positions and attracted a fledgling biotechnology sector.

The Stem Cell Research Advisory Committee issued a request for proposals (RFP) this fall anticipating full funding at the previously committed level at \$10 million. In response, close to 90 applications were submitted, in the aggregate, requesting more than \$80 million and review by our internationally-recognized scientific peer review panel has been underway with secondary review and a decision on funding by the Stem Cell Research Advisory Committee planned for next month. Allocating \$10 million among these applicants would have been a formidable task to begin with, let alone half that amount. But more relevant to the task at hand – reducing the fiscal strain on the State – mitigation of half of the already-promised funding at this late stage is pennywise and pound foolish as it jeopardizes a fragile, still fledgling research effort that has already drawn revenue and jobs to Connecticut and is precisely in an area that virtually all strategic plans for economic development in Connecticut have emphasized.

Thank you for your consideration. I remain available to respond to any specific questions by committee members or your staff.

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